

FEBRUARY 17, 2009

TO: APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FROM: ANDREW & HEATHER BUCKNAM, TREAT FARM, ORANGE, CT

We are providing this testimony in opposition to the section of the bill that would authorize reducing or transferring Community Investment Act funds that should be used for farmland preservation.

- While much of the proposed bill addresses the cyclical nature of the economy, and we are giving up programs now with the thought that they might return in better times, **this is not so for farmland. Development of farmland into housing is permanent and irreversible.** Forcing farmers to sell their farms to pay taxes and meet other obligations is not something that can be undone in the next positive economic cycle. **These farms will be lost forever.**
- Farms are under the same pressure as other small businesses. The difference will be that unlike putting a "closed" sign in a storefront, which can be removed in a few years when the economy rebounds and the building is leased out to the same or another business, **once these farms are sold for housing, they will never return. Ever.**
- We should be smart enough to recognize that part of our quality of life in Connecticut comes from the rural character of parts of our state. Even in tough times, we can take a drive or a walk or a bike ride in our scenic countryside and find beauty and comfort there, a link to our agrarian past. Remove those scenes of tranquility, and you have more houses and strip malls that will be vacant in economic downturns like this one. We should not be indulging our consumerism any more by paving more landscapes and building more houses only to have them stand empty when the economy goes into recession. **We have too many houses and too many storefronts; we do not have enough pastures and meadows.**
- **We have a unique opportunity that exists only NOW to preserve these farms for all future generations. They will be lost otherwise. This program needs to be considered in a different light than almost all other funded state programs. There is no ability to defer buying these farms until better times. We cannot wait for the economy to rebound. THEY WILL BE GONE. We need to open our eyes and our minds to this difference to avoid making a horribly short-sighted mistake.**

Please revise the bill to remove any language that would decrease or remove funds that would otherwise be available for preserving farmland in Connecticut. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Andrew & Heather Bucknam
Treat Farm, Orange, CT